

The Old Constitution House  
15 North Main Street  
Windsor  
Windsor County  
Vermont

HABS No. VT-35  
HABS  
VT  
14-WIND,  
3-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

HABS  
VT.  
14. Windsor  
3-

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### THE OLD CONSTITUTION HOUSE

Street Address: 15 North Main Street, Windsor, Windsor County,  
Vermont

Present Owner: The Old Constitution House Association

Present Occupant: The Old Constitution House Association

Present Use: Preserved as a historical relic; contains his-  
torical collections; operated as a museum and  
a tea room.

Brief Statement  
of Significance: The Vermont Constitution was framed and adopted  
in this building in 1777.

#### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

##### A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Earliest known owner -  
a Mr. West who ran a Tavern in the building in 1777.  
To Samuel Patrick. To Samuel Patrick, Jr.; c. 1840  
to Thomas Boynton. July 10, 1914, presented to The  
Old Constitution House Association by Mrs. Caroline S.  
Fay and children.
2. Date of erection: Before 1777, probably c. 1768.
3. Architect: Unknown  
Builder, suppliers, etc.: Local
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: Unknown
5. Notes on alterations and additions: The building has  
been moved at least once, possibly twice. It previ-  
ously stood at the southeast corner of Depot Avenue  
and Main Street. It was moved to the present location  
in 1912. Foundations and alterations to the rear part  
of the building in the ell to accommodate the Tea Room  
and kitchen are presumably since then. Front porch  
apparently not original and probably dates since 1912.
6. References: Henry Steel Wardner, The Birthplace of  
Vermont, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1927,  
pp. 384-385.  
Hamilton Child, Gazetteer and Business Directory  
of Windsor County, Vermont for 1883-1884, Syracuse,  
New York, 1884, pp. 266-269.  
Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress  
Administration, Vermont, A Guide to the Green Mountain  
State, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1937, p. 149.

Dorothy and Richard Pratt, A Guide to Early American Homes, North, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1956, p. 86.

The White Pine Series of Architectural Monographs, Russell F. Whitehead, editor, The White Pine Bureau, 1915-1939, vol. 4, No. 6, p. 4.

The American Heritage Book of Great Historic Places, Richard M. Ketchum, editor, American Heritage Publishing Company and Simon and Schuster, Inc., New York, 1957.

New England, New York, Inter-Agency Committee Survey (NENYAC), 1955; typed cards by Dr. Thomas M. Pitkin, Recorder.

Old Buildings Project of the Robert Hull Fleming Museum at the University of Vermont, Burlington, 1937-1938.

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: The Vermont State Constitution was adopted in this building July 8, 1777. News of the fall of Fort Ticonderoga reached Windsor before the session had adopted a constitution and almost stopped the meeting, but a thunderstorm delayed adjournment long enough for the Constitution to be adopted by the session as they waited in this tavern. There has been a long and inconclusive argument as to which room the group met in. The building remained a tavern for many years under West, Patrick, Patrick Jr., and Thomas Boynton, at which time it was first called The Constitution House. It later fell into disrepair and miscellaneous usage before being restored by The Old Constitution House Association. The building contains many relics and documents relevant to its own history and Vermont history, including the Day Journal of the Innkeeper back to 1790.
- C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: Documents and records preserved in The Old Constitution House, including the Day Journal of the Innkeeper.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby  
November 1959

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: One of the earliest surviving houses in the area with important historical associations. Preserved by a local group as a historical museum.
2. Condition of fabric: Good

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Two-and-a-half stories, plus cellar. Front rectangular block 48'6" x 18'6", plus more modern rear ell and front porch.
2. Foundations: Modern - date from 1912.
3. Wall construction: Hewn timber frame. Clapboards.
4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc. One-story porch across entire front of the house is apparently not original. It is supported by six simple wood columns in Tuscan order.
5. Chimneys: Two main interior chimneys remain in front part of house.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Paneled front door with side and transom lights. Simple moulded detail.
  - b. Windows and shutters: Twelve-light over twelve-light double hung windows with modern, solid, wood shutters.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Gabled roof, asphalt shingles.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: Boxed cornice eaves with simple moulded trim.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor plans: Central hall type with two interior chimneys, a principal room to either side of the hall. Modern rear portion contains a Tea Room to the right and a kitchen to the left. There is a similar arrangement upstairs. Most of the rooms are now devoted to historical exhibits.
2. Stairways: Principal stairway, straight run, in central hallway.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: Plastered, papered.
4. Doorways and doors: Paneled doors.
5. Trim: Wood, moulded trim.
6. Hardware: Wrought iron where original.
7. Lighting: None

8. Heating: No modern heat; fireplaces only.

D. Site:

1. Orientation: House faces east.
2. Enclosures: None
3. Outbuildings: None.
4. Walks, driveways, etc.: Gravel drive, brick walk.
5. Landscaping, gardens, etc.: Informal landscaping - lawn, trees, flowers, shrubs.

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